

CITY OF MIAMI BEACH
Office of the City Manager
Letter to Commission No. 084-2005



To: Mayor David Dermer and
Members of the City Commission

Date: April 1, 2005

From: Jorge M. Gonzalez
City Manager

Subject: **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE UNIT INITIATIVES**

The purpose of this LTC is to inform the City Commission and Mayor of the successful sexual crime prevention initiatives of the Miami Beach Police Department's Domestic Violence Unit (DVU). The DVU Unit is comprised of two civilian employees; Victims Advocates Ms. Aifa Alvarez and Ms. Sarah Poux. In addition to sexual crime prevention, they also provide counseling and referrals to victims of domestic violence and other crimes. Ms. Alvarez and Ms. Poux proactively advocate sexual crime prevention measures to all segments of the community, but mostly focus on young females visiting the entertainment district. Because of its popularity, the Entertainment District is often a meeting place for parties and significant alcohol consumption making for a vulnerable environment especially for young women. This situation is especially true during the influx of people visiting the area during Spring Break.

Since 2002, the DVU Unit has conducted sexual crime awareness and prevention campaigns during the traditional Spring Break months. These campaigns had Ms. Poux and Ms. Alvarez responding to the entertainment district and City at large in excess of 30 days, during the evening hours on Friday and Saturdays to distribute leaflets and brochures advising of common sense tips to avoid being a victim of sexual battery.

As a result of the professional reputation of the DVU Unit, Ms. Aifa Alvarez was invited to give a presentation at a Volunteer Awareness Day Event at the Calvary Chapel Miami Beach on Saturday 29, 2005. As a guest speaker at this event, she explained the purpose and content of the Spring Break Sexual Crimes Prevention and Awareness Campaigns. Because of Ms. Alvarez's informative and professional presentation members of this Church became more involved in this campaign. Their response was amazing as twenty-two volunteers donated 107 hours of their time to the community in this drive. In an effort to further the message of the Campaign, Victims Advocate Sarah Poux contacted the Department of Health and obtained 100 calling cards on key rings offering information about sexual violence prevention and toll-free numbers for local rape crisis centers that offer confidential victim services and education. Since these initiatives have been instituted by the DVU Unit there has been a marked decrease in reported Sexual Battery crimes in the City of Miami Beach.

JMG:DW:DA

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